


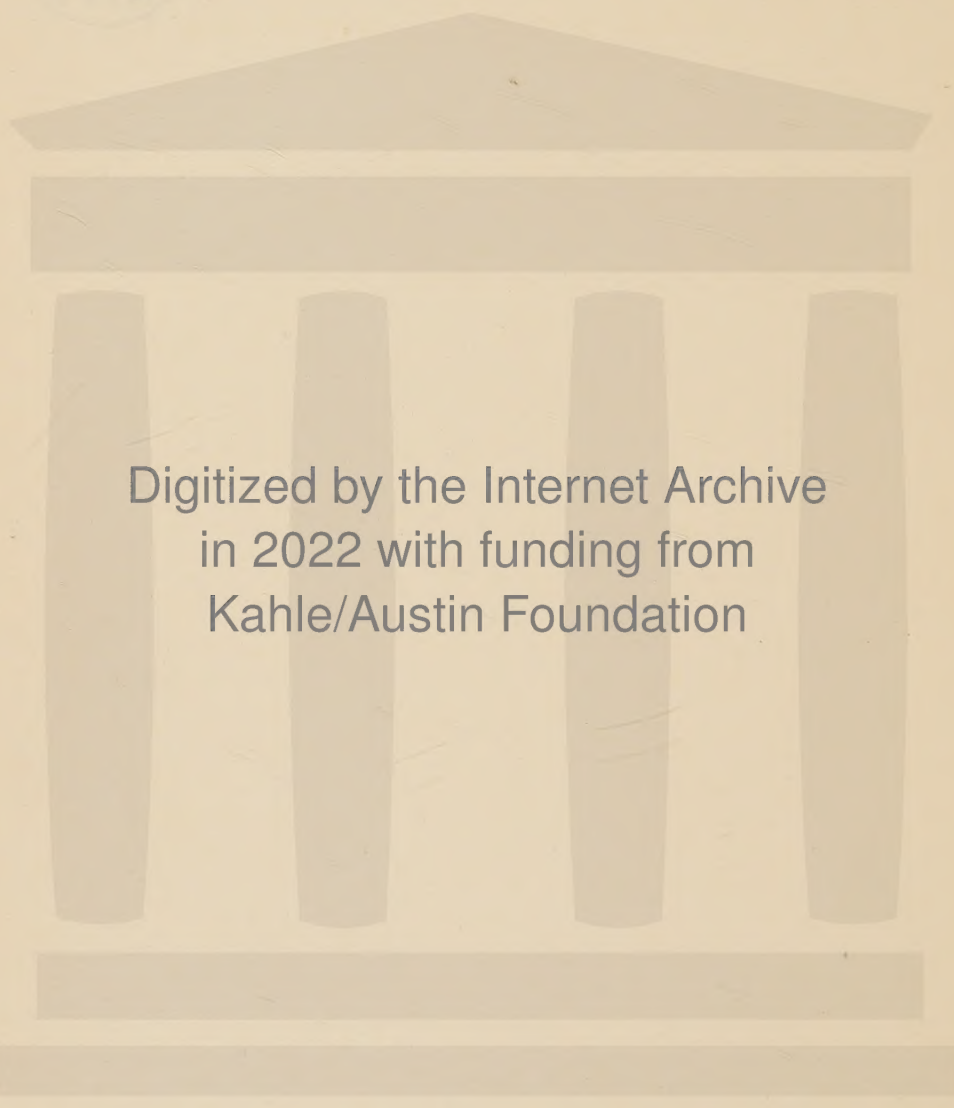
AMERICAN POETS

WILLIAM BRYANT

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A M E R I C A N P O E T S

A N A N T H O L O G Y
O F C O N T E M P O R A R Y V E R S E

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B Y L E O N O R A S P E Y E R

K U R T W O L F F V E R L A G M Ü N C H E N

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INTRODUCTION

IN putting together these pages of American contemporary verse I have endeavoured above all not to allow the more personal appeal of the many poems I read to lure me from the thought of their ultimate destination: the land of Goethe and Heine. Nor did I permit myself, in those pleasant wanderings along their devious and lovely paths, to stray beyond recall from a definite and single purpose, born of an admiration as sincere; that of bringing a group of our poets, small maybe but surely representative, to the attention of the poets and poetry-lovers of Germany where this book is to be published.

I was fully aware of the difficulty of my task. A small, representative anthology? Who has ever accomplished it? More than one poem, claiming immediate choice, was as promptly disqualified, owing to sheer length. Then too, I sought poems characteristically American, yet not too obscured with native colloquialisms; words that might perplex the foreign reader to whom no dictionary could bring enlightenment, and thus the beauty, the vitality, the whole meaning of the poem be possibly lost. — And I confess an antipathy to the lyric page dotted with stars like a murky sky, referring one to the prosaic interruption of editorial footnotes. —

Above all, I wanted poems from all parts of the country, emotionally and geographically, all moods of the country; the thoughts, ideals, passions of a people made of many peoples, as sung by their poets. One great, heterogeneous chorale! And my friend Kurt Wolff sounding his fateful, Brangäne-like note: the number of pages agreed upon, "*als Maximum!*"

Over the hours of work, over the elations and discouragements that such an undertaking must inevitably mean, lifted my resolute dream like a banner, with its bright vision of bringing the poets of the two countries nearer to each other. And if the poets, then surely the listeners of their songs? If only a little!

There are no rules in the making of an anthology. At least I have been able to discover none. Perhaps for this very reason it is such a baffling thing to do and so often such an unsatisfactory thing when done. Initially it may be anything the anthologist elects—I say initially with a certain emphasis, smacking perhaps of premonition, for these seemingly guileless pages when put together have a way of developing a personality of their own, a will of their own, and of deciding for themselves their eventual impetus and trend—. Obviously an anthology may be an enthusiastic selection of one's favourite poems, the simplest method, this, the most sincere undoubtedly, but by no means necessarily the best. Or it may be a clan-like summoning of one's mutual poet-friends, blood-brothers harmoniously singing together. Or again, there is the more judicial, if less joyous, plan of inviting an imposing company of the serenely arrived ones, irrespective of the compiler's own likes or dislikes; a feat of intellectual snobbery in which the individual mind plays a dull part, to be sure, but which may make a good book all the same. And above all, it can most assuredly be the little book, far too little to be truly representative; or, in one's desire to be superlatively fair, the kind and bulky volume not representative at all.

My attempt has been to profit by these various methods, if I may so call such adventures of choice. At the same time, I have striven to adhere to a rule of my own, evolved from much rulelessness: the bearing in mind of the stranger-eyes for whom these stranger-poems are destined. In all this, Alfred Kreymborg has been a source of unfailing help and my warm thanks are due him for the generosity of his patience. Especially trying to us both has been the inevitable process of elimination. We have been much distressed by the thought of poets dead and living — perhaps more by the living! — whose work, ardent and authentic, deserves a place here and finds none. Friendships, till now so blithely realized, have suddenly oppressed us. Critical faculty and

the trumpeting "*als Maximum*" have met the heart's more lenient hosts in passionate conflict. We have not always agreed, Mr. Kreymborg and I, he leaning a trifle more luxuriously than I toward radicalism in verse which in this country as in the older art-civilization of Europe, has taken such a definite and engagingly unabashed position. But our amicable differences, our two attitudes, so frankly and unantagonistically merged, have surely added to the catholicism of our book. With the exception of William Vaughn Moody and Adelaide Crapsey who died within the last few years, and Emily Dickinson, contemporary of Walt Whitman, of whose genius little is known beyond her native land, all our poets are living to-day. And it is with proud satisfaction that I am able to record the immediate and sympathetic response of those poets and of their publishers.

I offer this anthology of American verse to the poets and poetry-lovers of Germany, and to those other friends of "the sorrowful, great gift" into whose lands it may happily chance to wander. May it help to bring us all closer as only singing can.

... What of the different tongues?
Mortar and brick of lovely words
Shall build a tower
Of light, exceeding power;
A singing Babel!
The wall
Will rock, as rocks the mother,
But will not fall.

What of the many tongues
That say or sing
In many ways
One living thing?

The poets shall lay the corner-stone,
Shall raise
The high wall higher still,
And strong;
Put dream to dream, as block to block,
Pile shouting song on song!
 The lifting wall
Will rock,
Grow proud and tall.

What of the silent lands,
Silent too long?
Set them to music!
See, how the tower stands,
A trumpet at God's lips . . .
 And in His shattering hour,
Fortress will thunder song for song
From blossoming guns
No longer forged of fear
Or manned of hate;
Frontier will clasp frontier
With lovers' hands,
Stand breast to breast;
Hearts will grow great.
 And in that hour
God's breath will fill the tower,
Will hold it manifest,
And straight!

Leonora Speyer

AN ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY VERSE

MORNING SONG OF SENLIN

It is morning, Senlin says, and in the morning
When the light drips through the shutters like the dew,
I arise, I face the sunrise,
And do the things my fathers learned to do.
Stars in the purple dusk above the rooftops
Pale in a saffron mist and seem to die,
And I myself on a swiftly tilting planet
Stand before a glass and tie my tie.
Vine leaves tap my window,
Dew-drops sing to the garden stones,
The robin chirps in the chinaberry tree
Repeating three clear tones.

It is morning. I stand by the mirror
And tie my tie once more.
While waves far off in a pale rose twilight
Crash on a white sand shore.
I stand by a mirror and comb my hair:
How small and white my face!—
The green earth tilts through a sphere of air
And bathes in a flame of space.
There are houses hanging above the stars
And stars hung under a sea . . .
And a sun far off in a shell of silence
Dapples my walls for me . . .

It is morning, Senlin says, and in the morning
Should I not pause in the light to remember God?
Upright and firm I stand on a star unstable,
He is immense and lonely as a cloud.

I will dedicate this moment before my mirror
To him alone, for him I will comb my hair.
Accept these humble offerings, cloud of silence!
I will think of you as I descend the stair.

Vine-leaves tap my window,
The snail-track shines on the stones,
Dew-drops flash from the chinaberry tree
Repeating two clear tones.

It is morning. I awake from a bed of silence,
Shining I rise from the starless waters of sleep.
The walls are about me still as in the evening,
I am the same, and the same name still I keep.
The earth revolves with me, yet makes no motion,
The stars pale silently in a coral sky.
In a whistling void I stand before my mirror,
Unconcerned, and tie my tie.

There are horses neighing on far-off hills
Tossing their long white manes,
And mountains flash in the rose-white dusk,
Their shoulders black with rains . . .
It is morning. I stand by the mirror
And surprise my soul once more;
The blue air rushes above my ceiling,
There are suns beneath my floor . . .

. . . It is morning, Senlin says, I ascend from darkness
And depart on the winds of space for I know not where,
My watch is wound, a key is in my pocket,
And the sky is darkened as I descend the stair.

There are shadows across the windows, clouds in heaven,
And a god among the stars; and I will go
Thinking of him as I might think of daybreak
And humming a tune I know . . .

Vine-leaves tap at the window,
Dew-drops sing to the garden stones,
The robin chirps in the chinaberry tree
Repeating three clear tones.

Conrad Aiken

ADVICE TO A HORNÈD TOAD

Hornèd Toad of cloven brown,
Rock souls have dwindled to your eyes
And thrown a splintered end upon your blood.
Night and day have vanished
To you, who squat and watch
Years loosen one sand grain until
Its fall becomes your moment.
Tall things plunge over you,
Slashing their dreams with motion
That holds the death of all they seek,
But you, to whom fierce winds are ripples,
Do not move lest you lose the taste of stillness.

Hornèd Toad of cloven brown,
Never hop from your grey rock crevice
Mute with interwoven beginnings and ends.
The fluid lies of motion
Leave no remembrance behind.

Maxwell Bodenheim

ADVICE TO A BLUE-BIRD

Who can make a delicate adventure
Of walking on the ground?
Who can make grass-blades
Arcades for pertly careless straying?
You alone, who skim against these leaves,
Turning all desire into light whips
Moulded by your deep blue wing-tips,
You who shrill your unconcern
Into the sternly antique sky.
You to whom all things
Hold an equal kiss of touch.

Mincing, wanton blue-bird,
Grimace at the hoofs of passing men.
You alone can lose yourself
Within a sky, and rob it of its blue!

Maxwell Bodenheim

DEATH

I shall walk down the road.
I shall turn and feel upon my feet
The kisses of Death, like scented rain.
For Death is a black slave with little silver birds
Perched in a sleeping wreath upon his head.
He will tell me, his voice like jewels
Dropped into a satin bag,
How he has tip-toed after me down the road,
His heart made a dark whirlpool with longing for me.
Then he will graze me with his hands
And I shall be one of the sleeping, silver birds
Between the cold waves of his hair, as he tip-toes off.

Maxwell Bodenheim

THE MONK IN THE KITCHEN

I

Order is a lovely thing;
On disarray it lays its wing,
Teaching simplicity to sing.
It has a meek and lowly grace,
Quiet as a nun's face.
Lo—I will have thee in this place!
Tranquil well of deep delight,
All things that shine through thee appear
As stones through water, sweetly clear.
Thou clarity,
That with angelic charity
Revealest beauty where thou art,
Spread thyself like a clean pool,
Then all the things that in thee are,
Shall seem more spiritual and fair,
Reflection from serener air—
Sunken shapes of many a star
In the high heavens set afar.

II

Ye stolid, homely, visible things,
Above you all brood glorious wings
Of your deep entities, set high,
Like slow moons in a hidden sky.
But you, their likenesses, are spent
Upon another element.
Truly ye are but seemings—
The shadowy cast-off gleamings
Of bright solidities. Ye seem
Soft as water, vague as dream;
Image, cast in a shifting stream.

III

What are ye?
I know not.
Brazen pan and iron pot,
Yellow brick and gray flag-stone
That my feet have trod upon—
Ye seem to me
Vessels of bright mystery.
For ye do bear a shape, and so
Though ye were made by man, I know
An inner Spirit also made,
And ye his breathings have obeyed.

IV

Shape, the strong and awful spirit,
Laid his ancient hand on you.
He waste chaos doth inherit;
He can alter and subdue.
Verily, he doth lift up
Matter, like a sacred cup.
Into deep substance he reached, and lo
Where ye were not, ye were; and so
Out of useless nothing, ye
Groaned and laughed and came to be.
And I use you, as I can,
Wonderful uses, made for man,
Iron pot and brazen pan.

V

What are ye?
I know not;

Nor what I really do
When I move and govern you.
There is no small work unto God.
He required of us greatness;
Of His least creature
A high angelic nature,
Stature superb and bright completeness.
He sets to us no humble duty.
Each act that He would have us do
Is haloed round with strangest beauty;
Terrific deeds and cosmic tasks
Of His plainest child He asks.
When I polish the brazen pan
I hear a creature laugh afar
In the gardens of a star,
And from his burning presence run
Flaming wheels of many a sun.
Whoever makes a thing more bright,
He is an angel of all light.
When I cleanse this earthen floor
My spirit leaps to see
Bright garments trailing over it,
A cleanness made by me.
Purger of all men's thoughts and ways,
With labour do I sound Thy praise,
My work is done for Thee.
Whoever makes a thing more bright,
He is an angel of all light.
Therefore let me spread abroad
The beautiful cleanness of my God.

VI

One time in the cool of dawn
 Angels came and worked with me.
 The air was soft with many a wing.
 They laughed amid my solitude
 And cast bright looks on everything.
 Sweetly of me did they ask
 That they might do my common task.
 And all were beautiful—but One
 With garments whiter than the sun
 Had such a face
 Of deep, remembered grace;
 That when I saw I cried—"Thou art
 The great Blood-Brother of my heart.
 Where have I seen Thee?"—And He said,
 "When we are dancing round God's throne,
 How often thou art there.
 Beauties from thy hands have flown
 Like white doves wheeling in mid air.
 May—thy soul remembers not?
 Work on, and cleanse thy iron pot."

VII

What are we? I know not.

Anna Hempstead Branch

FROM "THE NEW WORLD"

Celia was laughing. Hopefully I said:
"How shall this beauty that we share,
This love, remain aware
Beyond our happy breathing of the air?
How shall it be fulfilled and perfected? . . .
If you were dead,
How then should I be comforted?"
But Celia knew instead:
"He who finds beauty here, shall find it there."
A halo gathered round her hair.
I looked and saw her wisdom bare
The living bosom of the countless dead.
. . . And there
I laid my head.

This is the song that she herself has taught me how to sing:
. . . As immigrants come toward America
On their continual ships out of the past,
So on my ship America have I, by birth,
Come forth at last
From all the bitter corners of the earth.
. . . Though I be told
A thousand facts to hold
Me back, though the old boundary
Rise up like hatred on my way,
Though fellow- voyagers cry,
"A lie!" —
Here as I come with heaven at my side
None of the weary words they say

Remain with me.
I am borne like a wave of the sea
Toward worlds to be . . .
And, young and bold,
I am happier than they —
The timid unbelievers who grow old!

Once when we broke a loaf of bread
And shared the honey, Celia said:
"To share all beauty as the interchanging dust,
To be akin and kind and to entrust
All men to one another for their good,
Is to have heard and understood,
And carried to the common enemy
In you and me,
The ultimation of democracy."
. . . And once when I had made complaint
About America, she warned me: "Be not faint
Of heart, but bold to see the soul's advance.
The chances are not far nor few . . .
Face beauty," Celia said, "then beauty faces you."

Celia has challenged me . . .
Be my reply,
Challenge to poets who, with tinkling tricks,
Meet life and pass it by.
"Beauty," they ask, "in politics?"
"If you but put it there," say I.

. . . O doubters of democracy,
Undo your mean contemptuous art! —

More than in all that poetry has said,
More than in mound or marble, in the living live the dead.
The past has done its reproductive part.
Hear now the cry of beauty's present needs,
Of comrades levelling a thousand creeds,
Finding futility
In conflict, selfishness, hardness of heart!

... If these be ecstasies of youth,
Yet they are news of which all time has need.
If they be lies, tell them yourselves and heed
How poets' twice-told lies become the truth!

Among good citizens I praise
Again a woman whom I knew and know,
A citizen whom I have seen
Most heartily, most patiently
Making God's mind.
A citizen who, dead,
Yet shines across her white-remembered ways
As the nearness of the light across the snow ...
My Celia, mystical, serene,
Laughing and kind.

... She said to me one day, where a hill renewed its flowers,
"How easy it would be to live and die
If only we would see the ultimate
Oneness of life, quicken
Our hearts with it and know that they who hate
And strike become by their own blow the stricken!"
"A stranger might be God," the Hindus cry.

But Celia says, importunate:
"Everyone must be God and you and I."

In temporary pain
The age is bearing a new breed
Of men and women, patriots of the world
And one another. Boundaries in vain,
Birthrights and countries, would constrain
The old diversity of seed
To be diversity of soul.

O mighty patriots, maintain
Your loyalty! — till flags unfurled
For battle shall arraign
The traitor who unfurled them, shall remain
And shine over an army with no slain,
And men from every nation shall enroll,
And women — in the hardihood of peace!

What can my anger do but cease?
Whom shall I fight and who shall be my enemy
When he is I and I am he?

Let me have done with that old God outside
Who watched with preference and answered prayer,
The Godhead who replied
Now here, now there,
Where heavy cannon were
Or coins of gold!
Let me receive communion with all men,
Acknowledging our one and only soul!

For not till then
Can God be God, till we ourselves are whole.

That midnight when the moon was tall
I walked alone by the white lake—yet with a vanished race
And with a race to come. To walk with dead men is to pray,
To walk with men unborn—to find the way.

And O my citizen, perhaps the few
Whom I shall tell of you
Will see with me your beauty who are dead,
Will hear with me your voice and what it said!
Let but a line of mine,
A single one,
Be made to shine
With your whole-heartedness as with the sun,
And I shall so consign
Your touch to younger and yet younger hands,
That they shall carry beauty through more lands
Than ever Helen laid her touch upon.

O Celia, my direction
And my destiny,
Toward a new world I see
New immigrants arriving from new ships . . .
And I hear your laughter upon all their lips.

Witter Bynner

CINQUAINS

TRAPPED

Well and
If day on day
Follows, and weary year
On year . . . and ever days and years . . .
Well?

THE GUARDED WOUND

If it
Were lighter touch
Than petal of flower resting
On grass, oh still too heavy it were,
Too heavy!

FATE DEFIED

As it
Were tissue of silver
I'll wear, O fate, thy grey,
And go mistily radiant, clad
Like the moon.

NOVEMBER NIGHT

Listen . . .
With faint dry sound,
Like steps of passing ghosts,
The leaves, frost—crisp'd, break from the trees
And fall.

RELEASE

With swift
Great sweep of her
Magnificent arm my pain
Clanged back the doors that shut my soul
From life.

TRIAD

These be
Three silent things:
The falling snow . . . the hour
Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one
Just dead.

Adelaide Crapsey

SONG

I make my shroud, but no one knows—
So shimmering fine it is and fair,
With stitches set in even rows,
I make my shroud, but no one knows.

In door-way where the lilac blows,
Humming a little wandering air,
I make my shroud and no one knows,
So shimmering fine it is and fair.

Adelaide Crapsey

I

The pedigree of honey
Does not concern the bee;
A clover, any time, to him
Is aristocracy.

II

Presentiment is that long shadow on the lawn
Indicative that suns go down;
The notice to the startled grass
That darkness is about to pass.

III

I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth,— the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a night,
We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips,
And covered up our names.

IV

If I shouldn't be alive
When the robins come,
Give the one in red cravat
A memorial crumb.

If I shouldn't thank you,
Being just asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my granite lip!

V

Ample make this bed,
Make this bed with awe;
In it wait till judgment break
Excellent and fair.

Be its mattress straight,
Be its pillow round;
Let no sunrise' yellow noise
Interrupt this ground.

VI

I never lost as much but twice,
And that was in the sod;
Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending,
Reimbursed my store.
Burglar, banker, father,
I am poor once more!

Emily Dickinson

THE ISLANDS

I

What are the islands to me,
What is Greece,
What is Rhodes, Samos, Chios,
What is Paros facing west,
What is Crete?

What is Samothrace,
Rising like a ship,
What is Imbros rending the storm-waves
With its breast?

What is Naxos, Paros, Milos,
What the circle about Lycia,
What, the Cyclades'
White necklace?

What is Greece—
Sparta, rising like a rock,
Thebes, Athens,
What is Corinth?

What is Euboia,
With its island violets,
What is Euboia, spread with grass,
Set with swift shoals,
What is Crete?

What are the islands to me,
What is Greece?

II

What can love of land give to me
That you have not—
What do the tall Spartans know,
And gentler Attic folk?

What has Sparta and her women
More than this?

What are the islands to me
If you are lost—
What is Naxos, Tinos, Andros,
And Delos, the clasp
Of the white necklace?

III

What can love of land give to me
That you have not,
What can love of strife break in me
That you have not?

Though Sparta enter Athens,
Thebes wrack Sparta,
Each changes as water,
Salt, rising to wreak terror
And fall back.

IV

“What has love of land given to you
That I have not?”

I have questioned Tyrians
Where they sat
On the black ships,
Weighted with rich stuffs,
I have asked the Greeks
From the white ships,
And Greeks from ships whose hulks
Lay on the wet sand, scarlet
With great beaks.
I have asked bright Tyrians
And tall Greeks—
“What has love of land given you?”
And they answered— “peace.”

V

But beauty is set apart,
Beauty is cast by the sea,
A barren rock,
Beauty is set about
With wrecks of ships,
Upon our coast, death keeps
The shallows—death waits
Clutching toward us
From the deeps.

Beauty is set apart;
The winds that slash its beach,
Swirl the coarse sand
Upward toward the rocks.
Beauty is set apart
From the islands
And from Greece.

VI

In my garden
The winds have beaten
The ripe lilies;
In my garden, the salt
Has wilted the first flakes
Of young narcissus,
And the lesser hyacinth,
And the salt has crept
Under the leaves of the white hyacinth.

In my garden
Even the wind-flowers lie flat,
Broken by the wind at last.

VII

What are the islands to me
If you are lost,
What is Paros to me
If your eyes draw back,
What is Milos
If you take fright of beauty,
Terrible, torturous, isolated,
A barren rock?

What is Rhodes, Crete,
What is Paros facing west,
What, white Imbros?

What are the islands to me
If you hesitate,

What is Greece if you draw back
From the terror
And cold splendour of song
And its bleak sacrifice?

H. D.

PORTRAIT OF A LADY

I

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do—
With “I have saved this afternoon for you”;
And four wax candles in the darkened room,
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead:
An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.

We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-tips.
“So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends—
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room.”

And so the conversation slips
Among the velleities and carefully caught regrets,
Through attenuated tones of violins
Mingled with remote cornets,
And begins:
“You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends;
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find,
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends—
(For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are not blind!
How keen you are!)
To find a friend who has these qualities,
Who has, and gives
Those qualities upon which friendship lives:

How much it means that I say this to you—
Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar*!

Among the windings of the violins,¹
And the ariettes
Of cracked cornets,
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own—
Capricious monotone
That is at least one definite “false note.”
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,
Admire the monuments,
Discuss the late events,
Correct our watches by the public clocks;
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

II

Now that lilacs are in bloom,
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
“Ah my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you who hold it in your hands—”
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks);
“You let it flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse,
And smiles at situations which it cannot see.”
I smile, of course,
And go on drinking tea.
“Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
My buried life, and Paris in the spring,

I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:
"I am always sure that you understand
My feelings, always sure that you feel,
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.

"You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.
You will go on, and when you have prevailed
You can say: 'At this point many a one has failed.'
But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy
Of one about to reach her journey's end.

"I shall sit here, serving tea to friends . . ."

I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends
For what she has said to me?

You will see me any morning in the park
Reading the comics and the sporting page.
Particularly I remark
An English countess goes upon the stage,
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed.
I keep my countenance,
I remain self-possessed
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired,

Reiterates some worn-out common song,
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden
Recalling things that other people have desired.
Are these ideas right or wrong?

III

The October night comes down. Returning as before,
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease,
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

"And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?
But that's a useless question.
You hardly know when you are coming back,
You will find so much to learn."
My smile falls heavily among the bric-a-brac.

"Perhaps you can write to me."
My self-possession flares up for a second:
This is as I had reckoned.
"I have been wondering frequently of late
(But our beginnings never know our ends!)
Why we have not developed into friends."
I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark
Suddenly, his expression in a glass.
My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,
They all were sure our feelings would relate
So closely! I myself can hardly understand.

We must leave it now to fate.
You will write, at any rate.
Perhaps it is not too late.
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends.”

And I must borrow every changing shape
To find expression . . . dance, dance
Like a dancing bear,
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance . . .
Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,
Afternoon gray and smoky, evening yellow and rose;
Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand
With the smoke coming down above the house tops;
Doubtful, for quite a while
Not knowing what to feel or if I understand
Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .
Would she not have the advantage, after all?
This music is successful with a “dying fall”
Now that we talk of dying—
And should I have the right to smile?

T. S. Eliot

ARIZONA

WINDMILLS

The windmills, like great sunflowers of steel,
Lift themselves proudly over the straggling houses;
And at their feet the deep blue-green alfalfa
Cuts the desert like the stroke of a sword.

Yellow melon flowers
Crawl beneath the withered peach-trees;
A date-palm throws its heavy fronds of steel
Against the scoured metallic sky.

The houses, doubled-roofed for coolness,
Cower amid the manzanita scrub.
A man with jingling spurs
Walks heavily out of a vine-bowered doorway,
Mounts his pony, rides away.

The windmills stare at the sun.
The yellow earth cracks and blisters.
Everything is still.

In the afternoon
The wind takes dry waves of heat and tosses them,
Mingled with dust, up and down the streets,
Against the belfry with its green bells:

And, after sunset, when the sky
Becomes a green and orange fan,
The windmills, like great sunflowers on dried stalks,
Stare hard at the sun they cannot follow.

Turning, turning, forever turning
In the chill night-wind that sweeps over the valley,
With the shriek and the clank of the pumps groaning beneath them,
And the choking gurgle of tepid water.

MEXICAN QUARTER

By an alley lined with tumble-down shacks
And street-lamps askew, half-sputtering,
Feebly glimmering on gutters choked with filth and dogs
Scratching their mangy backs:
Half-naked children are running about,
Women puff cigarettes in black doorways,
Crickets are crying.
Men slouch sullenly
Into the shadows:
Behind a hedge of cactus,
The smell of a dead horse
Mingles with the smell of tamales frying.

And a girl in a black lace shawl
Sits in a rickety chair by the square of an unglazed window,
And sees the explosion of the stars
Softly poised on a velvet sky.
And she is humming to herself:—
“Stars, if I could reach you,
(You are so very clear that it seems as if I could reach you)
I would give you all to Madonna’s image,
On the grey-plastered altar behind the paper flowers,
So that Juan would come back to me,
And we could live again those lazy burning hours
Forgetting the tap of my fan and my sharp words.

And I would only keep four of you,
Those two blue-white ones overhead,
To hang in my ears;
And those two orange ones yonder,
To fasten on my shoe-buckles."

A little further along the street
A man sits stringing a brown guitar.
The smoke of his cigarette curls round his head,
And he, too, is humming, but other words:
"Think not that at your window I wait;
New love is better, the old is turned to hate.
Fate! Fate! All things pass away;
Life is forever, youth is for a day.
Love again if you may
Before the stars are blown out of the sky
And the crickets die;
Babylon and Samarkand
Are mud walls in a waste of sand."

RAIN IN THE DESERT

The huge red-buttressed mesa over yonder
Is merely a far-off temple where the sleepy sun is burning
Its altar-fires of pinyon and of toyon for the day.

The old priests sleep, white-shrouded,
Their pottery whistles lie beside them, the prayer-sticks closely feathered;
On every mummied face there glows a smile.

The sun is rolling slowly
Beneath the sluggish folds of the sky-serpents,
Coiling, uncoiling, blue-black, sparked with fires.

The old dead priests
Feel in the thin dried earth that is heaped about them,
Above the smell of scorching oozing pinyon,
The acrid smell of rain.

And now the showers
Surround the mesa like a troop of silver dancers:
Shaking their rattles, stamping, chanting, roaring,
Whirling, extinguishing the last red wisp of light.

CLOUDS ACROSS THE CANYON

Shadows of clouds
March across the canyon,
Shadows of blue hands passing
Over a curtain of flame.

Clutching, staggering, upstriking,
Darting in blue-black fury,
To where pinnacles, green and orange,
Await.

The winds are battling and striving to break them:
Thin lightnings spit and flicker,
The peaks seem a dance of scarlet demons
Flitting amid the shadows.

Grey rain-curtains wave afar off,
Wisps of vapour curl and vanish.
The sun throws soft shafts of golden light
Over rose-buttressed palisades.

Now the clouds are a lazy procession;
Blue balloons bobbing solemnly
Over black-dappled walls,

Where rise sharp-fretted, golden-roofed cathedrals
Exultantly, and split the sky with light.

John Gould Fletcher

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

THE PASTURE

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I shan't be gone long.— You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I sha'n't be gone long.— You come too.

Robert Frost

HOME BURIAL

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs
Before she saw him. She was starting down,
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.
She took a doubtful step and then undid it
To raise herself and look again. He spoke
Advancing toward her: "What is it you see
From up there always—for I want to know."
She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,
And her face changed from terrified to dull.
He said to gain time: "What is it you see,"
Mounting until she cowered under him.
"I will find out now—you must tell me, dear."
She, in her place, refused him any help
With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,
Blind creature; and a while he didn't see.
But at last he murmured, "Oh," and again, "Oh."

"What is it—what?" she said.

"Just that I see."

"You don't," she challenged. "Tell me what it is."

"The wonder is I didn't see at once.
I never noticed it from here before.
I must be wonted to it—that's the reason.
The little graveyard where my people are!
So small the window frames the whole of it.
Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it?
There are three stones of slate and one of marble,
Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight
On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*."

But I understand: it is not the stones,
But the child's mound—."

"Don't, don't, don't, don't," she cried.

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm
That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;
And turned on him with such a daunting look,
He said twice over before he knew himself:
"Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?"
"Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!
I must get out of here. I must get air.
I don't know rightly whether any man can.

"Amy! Don't go to someone else this time.
Listen to me. I won't come down the stairs."
He sat and fixed his chin between his fists.
"There's something I would like to ask you, dear."

"You don't know how to ask it."

"Help me, then."

Her fingers moved the latch for all reply.

"My words are nearly always an offence.
I don't know how to speak of anything
So as to please you. But I might be taught
I should suppose. I can't say I see how.
A man must partly give up being a man
With women-folk. We could have some arrangement
By which I'd bind myself to keep hands off
Anything special you're a-mind to name.
Though I don't like such things 'twixt those that love.
Two that don't love can't live together without them."

She moved the latch a little. "Don't—don't go.
Don't carry it to someone else this time.
Tell me about it if it's something human.
Let me into your grief. I'm not so much
Unlike other folks as your standing there
Apart would make me out. Give me my chance.
I do think, though, you overdo it a little.
What was it brought you up to think it the thing
To take your mother-loss of a first child
So inconsolably—in the face of love.
You'd think his memory might be satisfied—"

"There you go sneering now!"

"I'm not, I'm not!"

You make me angry. I'll come down to you.
God, what a woman! And it's come to this,
A man can't speak of his own child that's dead."
"You can't because you don't know how.
If you had any feelings, you that dug
With your own hand—how could you?—his little grave;
I saw you from that very window there,
Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly
And roll back down the mound beside the hole.
I thought, Who is that man? I didn't know you.
And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs
To look again, and still your spade kept lifting.
Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice
Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,
But I went near to see with my own eyes.
You could sit there with the stains on your shoes
Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave

And talk about your everyday concerns.
You had stood the spade up against the wall
Outside there in the entry, for I saw it."

"I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed."

"I can repeat the very words you were saying.
'Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.'
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
What had how long it takes a birch to rot
To do with what was in the darkened parlour.
You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go
With anyone to death, comes so far short
They might as well not try to go at all.
No, from the time that one is sick to death,
One is alone, and he dies more alone.
Friends make pretence of following to the grave,
But before one is in it, their minds are turned
And making the best of their way back to life
And living people, and things they understand.
But the world's evil. I won't have grief so
If I can change it. Oh, I won't, I won't!"

"There, you have said it all and you feel better.
You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.
The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.
Amy! There's someone coming down the road!"
"*You*—oh, you think the talk is all. I must go—
Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you—"

“If—you—do!” She was opening the door wider.
“Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.
I’ll follow and bring you back by force. I *will!*—”

Robert Frost

LITTLE THINGS

There's nothing very beautiful and nothing very gay
About the rush of faces in the town by day,
But a light tan cow in a pale green mead,
That is very beautiful, beautiful indeed . . .
And the soft March wind and the low March mist
Are better than kisses in a dark street kissed . . .
The fragrance of the forest when it wakes at dawn,
The fragrance of a trim green village lawn,
The hearing of the murmur of the rain at play—
These things are beautiful, beautiful as day!
And I shan't stand waiting for love or scorn
When the feast is laid for a day new-born . . .
Oh, better let the little things I loved when little
Return when the heart finds the great things brittle;
And better is a temple made of bark and thong
Than a tall stone temple that may stand too long.

Orrick Johns

THE INTERPRETER

In the very early morning when the light was low
She got all together and she went like snow,
Like snow in the springtime on a sunny hill,
And we were only frightened and can't think still.

We can't think quite that the katydids and frogs
And the little crying chickens and the little grunting hogs,
And the other living things that she spoke for to us
Have nothing more to tell her since it happened thus.

She never is around for any one to touch,
But of ecstasy and longing she too knew much,
And always when any one has time to call his own
She will come and be beside him as quiet as a stone.

Orrick Johns

DOROTHY

HER EYES

Her eyes hold black whips—
 dart of a whip
 lashing, nay, flicking,
 nay, merely caressing
 the hide of a heart—
and a broncho tears through canyons—
 walls reverberating,
 sluggish streams
 shaken to rapids and torrents,
 storm destroying
 silence and solitude!
Her eyes throw black lariats—
 one for his head,
 one for his heels—
and the beast lies vanquished—
 walls still,
 streams still—
 except for a tarn,
 or is it a pool,
 or is it a whirlpool
 twitching with memory?

HER HANDS

Blue veins
 of morning glories—
blue veins
 of clouds—

blue veins
bring deep-toned silence
after a storm.

White horns
of morning glories—
white flutes
of clouds—
sextettes hold silence fast,
cup it for aye.

Could I
blow morning glories—
could I
lip clouds—

I'd sound the silence
her hands bring to me.

Had I
the yester sun—
had I
the morrow's—
brush them like cymbals,
I'd then sound the noise.

HER BODY

Her body gleams
like an altar candle—
white in the dark—
and modulates
to voluptuous bronze—
bronze of a sea—
under the flame.

Alfred Kreymborg

ANTS

Who made the world, sir?

I don't know, son —

See the ants on that hill, with a fly.

Who made the world, sir?

Some say that God—

The fly is dead, son.

They're dragging him to their hole

Who made God, sir?

I don't know—

Now he's gone, son.

The ants are an indefatigable race.

Who made God, sir?

Observe how they swarm all over the hill.

They're hunting another fly.

They're funny, sir.

They are.

Alfred Kreymborg

CIRCE

Voice, marvellous voice:

Come back to me!

Pelt me with fresher wild roses;

Caress me with bluer anemones;

Bruise me with thornier thistles;

Embrace, imprison, smother me

With the merriest of buttercups and daisies!

Come back for a superlative moment,

And I will be all your swine in one,
Your lowest groveller, your funniest of mirelings!
Come back ere I run mad
Inside this miserable, yearning, incomprehensible,
Beauty-worshipping I of mine!

Alfred Kreymborg

TO WHITMAN

Monster!
You would take me,
tiny me,
in your huge paws
and crunch me?
Child!
I can take you,
tiny you,
between my thumbs
and love you.
Come on!

Alfred Kreymborg

CÉZANNE

Our door was shut to the noon-day heat.
We could not see him.
We might not have heard him either—
resting, dozing, dreaming pleasantly.
But his step was tremendous—
are mountains on the march?

He was no man who passed.
But a great faithful horse
dragging a load
up the hill.

Alfred Kreymborg

THE TREE

I am four monkeys.
One hangs from a limb,
tail-wise,
chattering at the earth;
another is cramming his belly with cocoanut;
the third is up in the top branches,
quizzing the sky;
and the fourth—
he's chasing another monkey.
How many monkeys are you?

Alfred Kreymborg

UNDER GLASS

If I could catch that moth,
that fluttering, wayward thing
that beats about inside me all the day and half the night,
(an insignificant net could certainly do it)
I'd stick him through the head
with a pin that's long and thin,
a pin that's long and strong enough to mount him under glass;
(an insignificant pin could certainly do it)
I'd learn of him once for all,
the color of his wings,
the nature of those crazy things that fooled me all these years;
purple, red or blue,
yellow, white or black,
or whether they're one and all of these and a shade or two besides;
(an insignificant harmony or dissonance they could be)
I'd learn them once for all,
I'd know them, every vein,
so clear to all my neighbors, so invisible—to me.

Alfred Kreymborg

THE GHOSTS OF THE BUFFALOES

Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all,
That which is gendered in the wilderness
From lonely prairies and God's tenderness.
Imperial soul, star of a weedy stream,
Born where the ghosts of buffaloes still dream,
Whose spirit hoof-beats storm above his grave,
Above that breast of earth and prairie-fire—
Fire that freed the slave.

Last night at black midnight I woke with a cry,
The windows were shaking, there was thunder on high,
The floor was a-tremble, the door was a-jar,
White fires, crimson fires, shone from afar.
I rushed to the door yard. The city was gone.
My home was a hut without orchard or lawn.
It was mud-smear and logs near a whispering stream,
Nothing else built by man could I see in my dream...
Then...
Ghost-kings came headlong, row upon row,
Gods of the Indians, torches aglow.

They mounted the bear and the elk and the deer,
And eagles gigantic, aged and sere,
They rode long-horn cattle, they cried "A-la-la."
They lifted the knife, the bow, and the spear,
They lifted ghost-torches from dead fires below,
The midnight made grand with the cry "A-la-la."
The midnight made grand with a red-god charge,
A red-god show,

A red-god show,
"A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

With bodies like bronze, and terrible eyes
Came the rank and the file, with catamount cries,
Gibbering, yipping, with hollow-skull clacks,
Riding white bronchos with skeleton backs,
Scalp-hunters, beaded and spangled and bad,
Naked and lustful and foaming and mad,
Flashing primeval demoniac scorn,
Blood-thirst and pomp amid darkness reborn,
Power and glory that sleep in the grass
While the winds and the snows and the great rains pass.
They crossed the gray river, thousands abreast,
They rode in infinite lines to the west,
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep.
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

And the wind crept by
Alone, unkempt, unsatisfied,
The wind cried and cried—
Muttered of massacres long past,
Buffaloes in shambles vast . . .
An owl said: "Hark, what is a-wing?"
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling.

Then . . .

Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high
Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.

The lords of the prairie came galloping by.

And I cried in my heart "A-la-la, a-la-la,

A red-god show,

A red-god show,

A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,

A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west.

With black bobbing noses, with red rolling tongues,

Coughing forth steam from their leather-wrapped lungs,

Cows with their calves, bulls big and vain,

Goring the laggards, shaking the mane,

Stamping flint feet, flashing moon eyes,

Pompous and owlsh, shaggy and wise.

Like sea-cliffs and caves resounded their ranks

With shoulders like waves, and undulant flanks.

Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,

Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,

The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,

And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.

They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,

And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

I heard a cricket's cymbals play,

A scarecrow lightly flapped his rags,

And a pan that hung by his shoulder rang,

Rattled and thumped in a listless way,

And now the wind in the chimney sang,

The wind in the chimney,

The wind in the chimney,
The wind in the chimney,
Seemed to say:—
“Dream, boy, dream,
If you anywise can.
To dream is the work
Of beast or man.
Life is the west-going dream-storm’s breath,
Life is a dream, the sigh of the skies,
The breath of the stars, that nod on their pillows
With their golden hair mussed over their eyes.”
The locust played on his musical wing,
Sang to his mate of love’s delight.
I heard the whippoorwill’s soft fret.
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket say: “Good-night, good-night,
Good-night, good-night, . . . good-night.”

Vachel Lindsay

PURPLE GRACKLES

The grackles have come.
The smoothness of the morning is puckered with their incessant chatter.
A sociable lot, these purple grackles,
Thousands of them strung across a long run of wind,
Thousands of them beating the air-ways with quick wing-jerks,
Spinning down the currents of the South.
Every year they come,
My garden is a place of solace and recreation evidently,
For they always pass a day with me.
With high good nature they tell me what I do not want to hear.
The grackles have come.

I am persuaded that grackles are birds;
But when they are settled in the trees
I am inclined to declare them fruits
And the trees turned hybrid blackberry vines.
Blackness shining and bulging under leaves,
Does not that mean blackberries, I ask you?
Nonsense! The grackles have come.

Nonchalant highwaymen, pickpockets, second-story burglars,
Stealing away my little hope of Summer.
There is no stealthy robbing in this.
Who ever heard such a gabble of thieves' talk!
It seems they delight in unmasking my poor pretense.
Yes, now I see that the hydrangea blooms are rusty;
That the hearts of the golden glow are ripening to lustreless seeds;
That the garden is dahlia-coloured,
Flaming with its last over-hot hues;

They rate me of no consequence,
But they might reflect that it is my gutter.
I know their opinion of me,
Because one is drying himself on the window-sill
Not two feet from my hand.
His purple neck is sleek with water,
And the fellow preens his feathers for all the world as if I were a fountain
statue.

If it were not for the window,
I am convinced he would light on my head.
Tyrian-feathered freebooter,
Appropriating my delightful gutter with so extravagant an ease,
You are as cool a pirate as ever scuttled a ship,
And are you not scuttling my Summer with every peck of your sharp bill?

But there is a cloud over the beech-tree,
A quenching cloud for lemon-livered suns.
The grackles are all swinging in the tree-tops,
And the wind is coming up, mind you.
That boom and reach is no Summer gale,
I know that wind,
It blows the Equinox over seeds and scatters them,
It rips petals from petals, and tears off half-turned leaves.
There is rain on the back of that wind.
Now I would keep the grackles,
I would plead with them not to leave me.
I grant their coming, but I would not have them go.
It is a milestone, this passing of grackles.
A day of them, and it is a year gone by.
There is magic in this and terror,
But I only stare stupidly out of the window.
The grackles have come.

Come! Yes, they surely came.
But they have gone.
A moment ago the oak was full of them,
They are not there now.
Not a speck of a black wing,
Not an eye-peep of a purple head.
The grackles have gone,
And I watch an Autumn storm
Stripping the garden,
Shouting black rain challenges
To an old, limp Summer
Laid down to die in the flower-beds.

Amy Lowell

THE MAN WITH THE HOE*

*("God created man in His own image, in the image of
God created He him," Genesis)*

Bowed by the weigh of centuries, he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Is this the thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passion of eternity?
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?
Down all the caverns of hell to their last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
More packed with danger to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,

* This poem was inspired by Millet's painting, "The Man with the Hoe."

The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the World,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing, distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers of all lands,
How will the future reckon with this man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those that shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb terror shall rise to judge the world,
After the silence of the centuries?

Edwin Markham

THE TWO MALEFACTORS

Ask Matthew, or ask Mark, and get the truth.
I know myself, was there and heard them both—
Both railed at him. No! one did not rebuke
The other for his railing; did not ask
To be remembered when into his Kingdom
Jesus should come. What kingdom? David's?—pah!
That had gone whirling with the desert's dust.
What kingdom? That within you? A fool's kingdom!
"To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise,"
He never said that. I was there. I know.
And if he did, where is that paradise?
Where is he? And where is the man they say
He said this to? Ask Matthew, learn the truth:
Both railed at him. Both died, nerved to the last
By bitter disappointment.

Listen, friend,
These malefactors were my brothers! Well,
I saw them grow up lusty. I beheld
Their course from hope to action, till defeat
And prison took them.

For we are the sons,
We Jews, of those who went to Babylon;
Returned to fall by Alexander's sword;
Were snatched by Syria, then Egypt came,
Put heels upon our necks. Rome sailed to us,
And took us over. And these bitter years
Made poets, prophets of us, spurred us on
To inflate the dream Jehovah with our breath

Of threats and curses; yet these bitter years
Kept at white heat the hope of David's throne,
Restored, triumphant, and our prophecies
Were from Jehovah of a king to come
Who would free Israel, drive the oppressor off,
And let us live as men.

Now it may be
A certain Jacob was his grandfather,
As Matthew says; or it may be that Heli
Was his grandfather, as Luke says, but still
Both say he was of David. And Luke says
The angel Gabriel came to Mary, his mother,
And said he shall be great and shall be called
The Son of the Most High, and God shall give him
The throne of his father David. He shall reign
Over the house of Jacob, and his kingdom
Shall have no end. We looked for such a one
To free us and with portents such as stars,
And Gabriel descending, Bethlehem
Become his birth-place, and the prophecies
Of old fulfilled, we looked for Israel freed,
And for a king of Jewish blood to rule us—
No Cæsar any more. For it was prophesied
Of Bethlehem: For out of thee shall come
A governor, a shepherd of my people!
And look, he's born in Bethlehem! And why not
Our hope re-kindled?

And now look at us;
These centuries bruised, imprisoned and made poor,
Jerusalem a city of wails and woes,

The whole of Israel slaved! And look at him!
How does he start his work, whatever it be?
By reading from Isaiah at Nazareth:—
“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because
He anointed me to preach good tidings to
The poor, hath sent me to proclaim release
To captives and to set at liberty
Them that are bruised.”

What doctrine may this be,
But change, or revolution, and the ferment
Of new wine bursting bottles frail and old,
This tyranny of Cæsar, this dependance
On alien rulership? You know yourself
Barabbas was not single in the crime
Of insurrection, ask the fellow Mark.
He'll tell you this Barabbas lay in bonds
With many who rose up, committed murder.
Of these were my two brothers, crucified
With Jesus on that day.

Well, so it was
He preached, was followed by the poor, the weak,
The slaved, despoiled until 'twas noised abroad
Through all the hill country and in the cities
That he stirred up the people everywhere,
Devising revolution, overthrow
Of Cæsar's rule. But there was murmuring too:
For some said he was good, and others said
He deceived the people. For upon a day
When he was asked directly of our tribute,
Whether to pay to Cæsar, not to pay,

He dodged and said: "Give Cæsar his due and God
His due"; but what we wished to know, was what
Was Cæsar's due, and give it him, and if
No tribute was his due, but rather casting
The yoke of Cæsar, then give Cæsar that.
He did not answer what the Pharisees asked,
That which *we* wished to hear him answer, though
The Pharisees had asked him. For we poor,
Enslaved and disinherited had followed
His leadership thus far.

Behold the change:
Passing from work unfinished he becomes
The Son of God and God himself, becomes
A mystery, the Word that lived and wrought
Before John who announced him. Tidings preached,
I grant you, to the poor, but who remain
Poor as before, but worn for broken hope
Of words that changed no thing. And no release
To captives, and no liberty to those
Bruised and in chains. And so I say his work
Is left unfinished, nothing done in truth.
And quickly, like a sun-rise on the hills,
He flashes forth his God-head, and we're left
To Cæsar's will, and end up with the words:—
His kingdom is of heaven, not of earth;
Refines the point: this kingdom is within us.
And he will die and rise again from death,
Ascend to heaven, and return again
Before this generation passes to take up
His own to heaven, and will rule forever
In heaven, not in Israel. For the world

Is to be burnt, with all its disbelievers.
And when it's burnt, sitting at God's right hand
He'll rule forever with his own! You see
What we expected vanished with such words,
Such madness, idle dreams.

But, as I said,
His lineage was David's; Matthew, Mark
Will tell you so. But David said of Christ,
Calling him Lord: "Sit thou on my right hand
Till I make enemies of thine thy foot-stool."
"How is Christ son of David, being his Lord?"
Asked Jesus of the Pharisees, closed their mouths
With asking that. The common people heard
Him gladly when he said this—true enough!
But I, my brothers, did not hear him gladly.
For if he were the son of God, yet equal
In being and in time with God, why not
The son and lord of David? Both perplex
The spirit of man; one mystery is as dark
As another mystery, and if one be so, then
Another may be also. Pass the point . . .

They crucified my brothers with him! Both
Railed on him for deliverance from the cross.
If he were God, he could have plucked the nails
And let them down, escape. And listen now:
My brothers kept their faith in him to the last,
And since they were condemned and had to pay
For insurrection on the cross, chose out
His day of crucifixion for their own;
Believed that he would save them, and so make

This choosing of his time of penalty
An hour of luck. And so I tell you truth:
Though both were railing it was rather pain
Than lack of hope that made them rail at him.
Nor was it mockery that made them rail.
They hoped to stir him by their words, evoke
His greatest strength to help them that they railed.
They even smiled a little that the nails
Were driven through their hands, as if to say:
“You cannot harm us when this god is here;
Go, do your butcher business, for at last
He’ll save himself and us.” And just as men
Refuse to think death near, and still believe
They will escape it somehow, when no aid,
But human hands is near, my brothers thought
This god would surely save them. So they talked,
Hunched up their legs and shoulders to ease up
The strain of hanging on the nails, and waited,
Joked with the lookers on, and smiled and begged,
And sweated agony and railed at last.
But when the voices in the crowd called out:
“If you trust God, let God deliver you,
If you are God’s son, let Him save you now;
Save thou thyself!” my older brother said:
“If I were off this cross I’d break your heads,
You crooked priests, you whited sepulchers,
You carrion Scribes and Pharisees.”

And such noise
As they cast lots to get his garments, shouts
When they were won and parted! In a silence
He asked his Father to forgive them, saying

They knew not what they did. My brother bawled:
“They know what they are doing, they have killed
The prophets in all ages! Don’t say that!
Don’t end up soft, you cursed them hitherto,
These are the vipers that you cursed before;
These are the vultures that you said you’d shut
The gates of heaven against; these are the wolves
That thirst for blood and lap it, unrepentant
Blasphemers against you and the Holy Ghost;
Committers of unpardonable sins, the band
You drove with knotted cords from out the temple.
And what is usury or selling doves
To killing you? Why ask your Father this?
Why now this softness? Change of mood, why prayers
Instead of curses? If you’re dying, sire,
Be what you were when you were flush with life,
And curse them into hell. Hold to your strength,
And curse them into hell.” And so it went
With talking back and forth, mixed in with groans,
And curses, railings, while my brothers twisted
Their bodies, and hunched up their thighs and backs
To ease the strain of hanging on the nails,
And dribbled at the mouth, and babbled things
And laughed like devils in a soul possessed.

But when he thirsted and they took a sponge
And gave him vinegar, and he sucked it in,
They looked at him with eyes that bulged with fear:—
They saw him drooping, fainting, losing strength,
They struggled then and shouted: “Keep on breathing!
Breathe deep! Call on your Father! Don’t give up!
Fight for your life, your god-head and ourselves!

We 're here because you came and preached, and stirred
The people! Don't desert us now! Great Lord,
Messiah, Son of God, are we first martyrs
To what you failed to do? We cannot die,
You must not die. Let David's throne be lost
As lost it is, but not our lives! Great Lord!"
Thus as they chattered, chattered, bawled and shouted.
Jesus threw back his head and cried so loud
That all the valleys echoed it: "My God,
My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And then
His head dropped on his chest—and he was dead . . .

They looked at him—my brothers looked at him,
And whimpered—they were beaten, but fought on.
Tears stained with blood went coursing down their cheeks.
And then the soldiers came to break their legs.
And one had fainted, but the other one
Was fighting still and said: "Have mercy, friend,
Cæsar would save me, what does Cæsar care
For one poor rebel?"

Then they broke their legs,
And all were dead. So ended up another
Chapter in this poor world's hopeless hope.

Edgar Lee Masters

THE POET AND HIS BOOK

Down, you mongrel, Death!

Back into your kennel!

I have stolen breath

In a stalk of fennel!

You shall scratch and you shall whine

Many a night, and you shall worry

Many a bone, before you bury

One sweet bone of mine!

When shall I be dead?

When my flesh is withered,
And above my head

Yellow pollen gathered
All the empty afternoon?

When sweet lovers pause and wonder
Who am I that lie thereunder,
Hidden from the moon?

This my personal death?—

That my lungs be failing
To inhale the breath

Others are exhaling?
This my subtle spirit's end?—

Ah, when the thawed winter splashes
Over these chance dust and ashes,
Weep not me, my friend!

Me, by no means dead

In that hour, but surely
When this book, unread,

Rots to earth obscurely,
And no more to any breast,
Close against the clamorous swelling
Of the thing there is no telling,
Are these pages pressed!

When this book is mould,
And a book of many
Waiting to be sold
For a casual penny,
In a little open case,
In a street unclean and cluttered,
Where a heavy mud is spattered
From the passing drays,

Stranger, pause and look;
From the dust of ages
Lift this little book,
Turn the tattered pages,
Read me, do not let me die!
Search the fading letters, finding
Steadfast in the broken binding
All that once was I!

When these veins are weeds,
When these hollowed sockets
Watch the rooty seeds
Bursting down like rockets,
And surmise the spring again,
Or, remote in that black cupboard,
Watch the pink worms writhing upward
At the smell of rain,

Boys and girls that lie
Whispering in the hedges,
Do not let me die,
Mix me with your pledges;
Boys and girls that slowly walk
In the woods, and weep, and quarrel,
Staring past the pink wild laurel,
Mix me with your talk,

Do not let me die!
Farmers at your raking,
When the sun is high,
While the hay is making,
When, along the stubble strewn,
Withering on their stalks uneaten,
Strawberries turn dark and sweeten
In the lapse of noon;

Shepherds on the hills,
In the pastures, drowsing
To the tinkling bells
Of the brown sheep browsing;
Sailors crying through the storm;
Scholars at your study; hunters
Lost amid the whirling winter's
Whiteness uniform;

Men that long for sleep;
Men that wake and revel;—
If an old song leap
To your senses' level
At such moments, may it be

Sometimes, though a moment only,
Some forgotten, quaint and homely
Vehicle of me!

Women at your toil,
Women at your leisure
Till the kettle boil,
Snatch of me your pleasure,
Where the broom-straw marks the leaf;
Women quiet with your weeping
Lest you wake a workman sleeping,
Mix me with your grief!

Boys and girls that steal
From the shocking laughter
Of the old, to kneel
By a dripping rafter
Under the discolored eaves,
Out of trunks with hingeless covers
Lifting tales of saints and lovers,
Travelers, goblins, thieves,

Suns that shine by night,
Mountains made from valleys,—
Bear me to the light,
Flat upon your bellies
By the webby window lie,
Where the little flies are crawling,—
Read me, margin me with scrawling,
Do not let me die!

*Sexton, ply your trade!
In a shower of gravel
Stamp upon your spade!
Many a rose shall ravel,
Many a metal wreath shall rust
In the rain, and I go singing
Through the lots where you are flinging
Yellow clay on dust!*

Edna St. Vincent Millay

A GREY DAY

Grey drizzling mists the moorlands drape,
Rain whitens the dead sea,
From headland dim to sullen cape
Grey sails creep wearily.
I know not how that merchantman
Has found the heart; but 'tis her plan
Seaward her endless course to shape.

Unreal as insects that appall
A drunkard's peevish brain,
O'er the grey deep the dories crawl,
Four-legged, with rowers twain:
Midgets and minims of the earth,
Across old ocean's vasty girth
Toiling—heroic, comical!

I wonder how that merchant's crew
Have ever found the will!
I wonder what the fishers do
To keep them toiling still!
I wonder how the heart of man
Has patience to live out its span,
Or wait until its dreams come true.

William Vaughn Moody

FROM "SONG-FLOWER AND POPPY"

In New York

He plays the deuce with my writing time,
For the penny my sixth-floor neighbor throws;
He finds me proud of my pondered rhyme,
And he leaves me—well, God knows
It takes the shine from a tunester's line
When a little mate of the deathless Nine
Pipes up under your nose!

For listen, there is his voice again,
Wistful and clear and piercing sweet.
Where did the boy find such a strain
To make a dead heart beat?
And how in the name of care can he bear
To jet such a fountain into the air
In this grey gulch of a street?

Tuscan slopes or the Piedmontese?
Umbria under the Apennine?
South, where the terraced lemon-trees
Round rich Sorrento shine?
Venice moon on the smooth lagoon?—
Where have I heard that aching tune,
That boyish throat divine?

Beyond my roofs and chimney pots
A rag of sunset crumbles grey;
Below, fierce radiance hangs in clots
O'er the streams that never stay.

Shrill and high, newsboys cry
The worst of the city's infamy
For one more sordid day.

But my desire has taken sail
For lands beyond, soft-horizoned:
Down languorous leagues I hold the trail,
From Marmalada, steeply throned
Above high pastures washed with light,
Where dolomite by dolomite
Looms sheer and spectral-coned,

To purple vineyards looking south
On reaches of the still Tyrrhene;
Virgilian headlands, and the mouth
Of Tiber, where that ship put in
To take the dead men home to God,
Whereof Casella told the mode
To the great Florentine.

Up stairways blue with flowering weed
I climb to hill-hung Bergamo;
All day I watch the thunder breed
Golden above the springs of Po,
Till the voice makes sure its wavering lure,
And by Assisi's portals pure
I stand, with heart bent low.

O hear, how it blooms in the blear dayfall,
That flower of passionate wistful song!
How it blows like a rose by the iron wall
Of the city loud and strong.

How it cries, "Nay, nay", to the worldling's way,
To the heart's clear dream how it whispers, "Yea;
Time comes, though the time is long."

Beyond my roofs and chimney piles
Sunset crumbles, ragged, dire;
The roaring street is hung for miles
With fierce electric fire.
Shrill and high, newsboys cry
The gross of the planet's destiny
Through one more sullen gyre.

Stolidly the town flings down
Its lust by day for its nightly lust;
Who does his given stint, 't is known,
Shall have his mug and crust.—
Too base of mood, too harsh of blood,
Too stout to seize the grosser good,
Too hungry after dust!

O hark! how it blooms in the falling dark,
That flower of mystical yearning song:
Sad as a hermit thrush, as a lark
Uplifted, glad, and strong.
Heart, we have chosen the better part!
Save sacred love and sacred art
Nothing is good for long.

William Vaughn Moody

PANDORA'S SONG

Of wounds and sore defeat
I made my battle stay;
Wingèd sandals for my feet
I made of my delay;
Of weariness and fear
I made my shouting spear;
Of loss, and doubt, and dread,
And swift oncoming doom
I made a helmet for my head
And a floating plume.
From the shutting mist of death,
From the failure of the breath,
I made a battle-horn to blow
Across the vales of overthrow.
O hearken, love, the battle-horn!
The triumph clear, the silver scorn!
O hearken where the echoes bring,
Down the grey disastrous morn,
Laughter and rallying!

William Vaughn Moody

TALISMAN

Under a splintered mast,
torn from the ship and cast
 near her hull,

a stumbling shepherd found
embedded in the ground,
 a sea-gull

of lapis lazuli,
a scarab of the sea,
 with wings spread—

curling its coral feet,
parting its beak to greet
 men long dead.

Marianne Moore

A GRAVE

Man, looking into the sea—
taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it
yourself—

it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.

The firs stand in a procession—each with an emerald turkey-foot at the top—
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;

repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.

There are others besides you who have worn that look—
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them
for their bones have not lasted:

men lower nets unconscious that they are desecrating a grave,
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing
as death.

The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks
of foam,

and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting catcalls as heretofore—
the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things
are bound to sink—

in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

Marianne Moore

AS I WENT BY

As I went by,
An old man with a curded eye,
Said: "Much as you can laugh and kiss,
You will be like this."
And I did not believe him,
But made haste to leave him,
Laughing all the way.
Yet, another day,
He made the self-same say,
For my laughter grieved him.
And I believed him!

Then I shook
Like a willow in a brook,
Like the ox from the goad,
Like the slave beneath the load,
Like the reed under rain,
And the sick man in pain,
And the hind before the hound,
And the new corpse in the ground!

Rose O'Neill

THE GIFT

Now that I am lame,
Now the fierce is tame,
Now the mane is shorn,
And the banner torn;
I bring thee, lord,
The shattered sword.
Take the tattered fool,
Take the broken tool,
Take the last offense,
This ruined insolence!

Rose O'Neill

ESTABLISHED

I made a house of houselessness,
A garden of your going:
And seven trees of seven wounds
You gave me, all unknowing:
I made a feast of golden grief
That you so lordly left me,
I made a bed of all the smiles
Whereof your lip bereft me:
I made a sun of your delay,
Your daily loss, his setting:
I made a wall of all your words
And a lock of your forgetting.

Rose O'Neill

N. Y.

My City, my beloved, my white!

Ah, slender,

Listen! Listen to me, and I will breathe into thee a soul.

Delicately upon the reed, attend me!

Now do I know that I am mad,

For here are a million people surly with traffic;

This is no maid.

Neither could I play upon any reed if I had one.

My City, my beloved,

Thou art a maid with no breasts,

Thou art slender as a silver reed.

Listen to me, attend me!

And I will breathe into thee a soul,

And thou shalt live for ever.

Ezra Pound

THE GARRET

Come let us pity those who are better off than we are.

Come, my friend, and remember

that the rich have butlers and no friends,

And we have friends and no butlers.

Come let us pity the married and the unmarried.

Dawn enters with little feet

like a gilded Pavlova,

And I am near my desire.

Nor has life in it aught better

Than this hour of clear coolness,

the hour of waking together.

Ezra Pound

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

Come, my songs, let us express our baser passions.

Let us express our envy for the man with a steady job and no
worry about the future.

You are very idle, my songs;

I fear you will come to a bad end.

You stand about the streets. You loiter at the corners and bus-stops,

You do next to nothing at all.

You do not even express our inner nobility;

You will come to a very bad end.

And I? I have gone half cracked.

I have talked to you so much

that I almost see you about me,

Insolent little beasts! Shameless! Devoid of clothing!

But you, newest song of the lot,
You are not old enough to have done much mischief.
I will get you a green coat out of China
With dragons worked upon it.
I will get you the scarlet silk trousers
From the statue of the infant Christ at Santa Maria Novella;

Lest they say we are lacking in taste,
Or that there is no caste in this family.

Ezra Pound

THE EDGE

I thought to die that night in the solitude

where they would never find me...

But there was time . . .

And I lay quietly on the drawn knees of the mountain,

staring into the abyss . . .

I do not know how long...

I could not count the hours, they ran so fast

Like little bare-foot urchins—shaking my hands

away . . .

But I remember

Somewhere water trickled like a thin severed vein...

And a wind came out of the grass,

Touching me gently, tentatively, like a paw.

As the night grew

The gray clouds that had covered the sky like sackcloth

Fell in ashen folds about the hills,

Like hooded virgins, pulling their cloaks about

them . . .

There must have been a spent moon,

For the Tall One's veil held a shimmer of silver...

That too I remember . . .

And the tenderly rocking mountain,

Silence

And beating stars . . .

Dawn

Lay like a waxen hand upon the world,

And folded hills

Broke into a sudden wonder of peaks, stemming clear
and cold,
Till the Tall One bloomed like a lily,
Flecked with sun,
Fine as a golden pollen—
It seemed a wind might blow it from the snow.

I smelled the raw sweet essences of things,
And heard spiders in the leaves
And ticking of little feet,
As tiny creatures came out of their doors
To see God pouring light into his star . . .

. . . It seemed life held
No future and no past but this . . .

And I too got up stiffly from the earth,
And held my heart up like a cup . . .

Lola Ridge

FLAMMONDE

The man Flammonde, from God knows where,
With firm address and foreign air,
With news of nations in his talk
And something royal in his walk,
With glint of iron in his eyes,
But never doubt, nor yet surprise,
Appeared, and stayed, and held his head
As one by kings accredited.

Erect, with his alert repose
About him, and about his clothes,
He pictured all tradition hears
Of what we owe to fifty years.
His cleansing heritage of taste
Paraded neither want nor waste;
And what he needed for his fee
To live, he borrowed graciously.

He never told us what he was,
Or what mischance, or other cause,
Had banished him from better days
To play the Prince of Castaways.
Meanwhile he played surpassing well
A part, for most, unplayable;
In fine, one pauses, half afraid
To say for certain that he played.

For that, one may as well forego
Conviction as to yes or no;

Nor can I say just how intense
Would then have been the difference
To several, who, having striven
In vain to get what he was given,
Would see the stranger taken on
By friends not easy to be won.

Moreover, many a malcontent
He soothed and found munificent;
His courtesy beguiled and foiled
Suspicion that his years were soiled;
His mien distinguished any crowd,
His credit strengthened when he bowed;
And women, young and old, were fond
Of looking at the man Flammonde.

There was a woman in our town
On whom the fashion was to frown;
But while our talk renewed the tinge
Of a long-faded scarlet fringe,
The man Flammonde saw none of that,
And what he saw he wondered at—
That none of us, in our distress,
Could hide or find our littleness.

There was a boy that all agreed
Had shut within him the rare seed
Of learning. We could understand,
But none of us could lift a hand.
The man Flammonde appraised the youth,
And told a few of us the truth;
And thereby, for a little gold,
A flowered future was unrolled.

There were two citizens who fought
For years and years, and over nought;
They made life awkward for their friends,
And shortened their own dividends.
The man Flammonde said what was wrong
Should be made right; nor was it long
Before they were again in line,
And had each other in to dine.

And these I mention are but four
Of many out of many more.
So much for them. But what of him—
So firm in every look and limb?
What small satanic sort of kink
Was in his brain? What broken link
Withheld him from the destinies
That came so near to being his?

What was he, when we came to sift
His meaning, and to note the drift
Of incommunicable ways
That make us ponder while we praise?
Why was it that his charm revealed
Somehow the surface of a shield?
What was it that we never caught?
What was he, and what was he not?

How much it was of him we met
We cannot ever know; nor yet
Shall all he gave us quite atone
For what was his, and his alone;

Nor need we now, since he knew best,
Nourish an ethical unrest:
Rarely at once will nature give
The power to be Flammonde and live.

We cannot know how much we learn
From those who never will return,
Until a flash of unforeseen
Remembrance falls on what has been.
We've each a darkening hill to climb;
And this is why, from time to time
In Tilbury Town, we look beyond
Horizons for the man Flammonde.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

RICHARD CORY

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
„Good-morning,“ and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

*THE MASTER**

(Lincoln)

A flying word from here and there
Had sown the name at which we sneered,
But soon the name was everywhere,
To be reviled and then revered :
A presence to be loved and feared,
We cannot hide it, or deny
That we, the gentlemen who jeered,
May be forgotten by and by.

He came when days were perilous
And hearts of men were sore beguiled;
And having made his note of us,
He pondered and was reconciled.
Was ever master yet so mild
As he, and so untamable?
We doubted, even when he smiled,
Not knowing what he knew so well.

He knew that undeceiving fate
Would shame us whom he served unsought;
He knew that he must wince and wait —
The jest of those for whom he fought;
He knew devoutly what he thought
Of us and of our ridicule;
He knew that we must all be taught
Like little children in a school.

* Supposed to have been written not long after the Civil War.

We gave a glamour to the task
That he encountered and saw through,
But little of us did he ask,
And little did we ever do.
And what appears if we review
The season when we railed and chaffed?
It is the face of one who knew
That we were learning while we laughed.

The face that in our vision feels
Again the venom that we flung,
Transfigured to the world reveals
The vigilance to which we clung.
Shrewd, hallowed, harassed, and among
The mysteries that are untold,
The face we see was never young
Nor could it wholly have been old.

For he, to whom we had applied
Our shopman's test of age and worth,
Was elemental when he died,
As he was ancient at his birth:
The saddest among kings of earth,
Bowed with a galling crown, this man
Met rancor with a cryptic mirth,
Laconic—and Olympian.

The love, the grandeur, and the fame
Are bounded by the world alone;
The calm, the smouldering, and the flame
Of awful patience were his own:
With him they are forever flown

Past all our fond self-shadowings,
Wherewith we cumber the Unknown
As with inept, Icarian wings.

For we were not as other men:
'Twas ours to soar and his to see;
But we are coming down again,
And we shall come down pleasantly;
Nor shall we longer disagree
On what it is to be sublime,
But flourish in our perigee
And have one Titan at a time.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

MANY ARE CALLED

The Lord Apollo, who has never died,
Still holds alone his immemorial reign,
Supreme in an impregnable domain
That with his magic he has fortified;
And though melodious multitudes have tried
In ecstasy, in anguish, and in vain,
With invocation sacred and profane
To lure him, even the loudest are outside.

Only at unconjectured intervals,
By will of him on whom no man may gaze,
By word of him whose law no man has read,
A questing light may rift the sullen walls,
To cling where mostly its infrequent rays
Fall golden on the patience of the dead.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

CHICAGO

Hog-Butcher for the World,
Tool-maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight-handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your
painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.

And they tell me you are crooked, and I answer, Yes, it is true

I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is, On the faces of
women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this
my city, and I give them back the sneer and say to them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud
to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is
a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;

Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage
pitted against the wilderness,

Bareheaded,

Shoveling,

Wrecking,

Planning,

Building, breaking, rebuilding,

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,

Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,

Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,

Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs
the heart of the people,

Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of youth; half-naked, sweating,
proud to be Hog-butcher, Tool-maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Rail-
roads, and Freight-handler to the Nation.

Carl Sandburg

JOY

Let a joy keep you.
Reach out your hands
And take it when it runs by,
As the Apache dancer
Clutches his woman.
I have seen them
Live long and laugh loud,
Sent on singing, singing,
Smashed to the heart
Under the ribs
With a terrible love.
Joy always,
Joy everywhere—
Let joy kill you!
Keep away from the little deaths.

Carl Sandburg

BUTTONS

I have been watching the war map slammed up for advertising in front of the newspaper office.

Buttons—red and yellow buttons—blue and black buttons—are shoved back and forth across the map.

A laughing young man, sunny with freckles,
Climbs a ladder, yells a joke to somebody in the crowd,
And then fixes a yellow button one inch west
And follows the yellow button with a black button one inch west.

(Ten thousand men and boys twist on their bodies in a red soak along a river edge,
Gasping of wounds, calling for water, some rattling death in their throats.)
Who would guess what it cost to move two buttons one inch on the war map here in front of the newspaper office where the freckled-faced young man is laughing at us?

Carl Sandburg

COOL TOMBS

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copper-heads and the assassin . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? Does she remember . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti or blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if any get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs.

Carl Sandburg

PETER QUINCE AT THE CLAVIER

I

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the self-same sounds
On my spirit make a music too.

Music is feeling then, not sound;
And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music. It is like the strain
Waked in the elders by Susanna:

Of a green evening, clear and warm,
She bathed in her still garden, while
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their being throb
In witching chords, and their thin blood
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

II

In the green evening, clear and warm,
Susanna lay.
She searched
The touch of springs,
And found
Concealed imaginings.

She sighed
For so much melody.

Upon the bank she stood
In the cool
Of spent emotions.
She felt, among the leaves,
The dew
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,
Still quavering.
The winds were like her maids,
On timid feet,
Fetching her woven scarves,
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand
Muted the night.
She turned—
A cymbal clashed,
And roaring horns.

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried
Against the elders by her side:

And as they whispered, the refrain
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon their lamps' uplifted flame
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then the simpering Byzantines
Fled, with a sound like tambourines.

IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.
So evenings die, in their green going,
A wave, interminably flowing.

So gardens die, their meek breath scenting
The cowl of Winter, done repenting.
So maidens die, to the auroral
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
Of those white elders; but, escaping,
Left only Death's ironic scraping.
Now in its immortality, it plays
On the clear viol of her memory,
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

Wallace Stevens

"THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS"

(War Time)

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum-trees in tremulous white;

Robins will wear their feathery fire
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

Sara Teasdale

THE LOOK

Strephon kissed me in the spring,

Robin in the fall,

But Colin only looked at me

And never kissed at all.

Strephon's kiss was lost in jest,

Robin's lost in play.

But the kiss in Colin's eyes

Haunts me night and day.

Sara Teasdale

WOOD SONG

I heard a wood thrush in the dusk
Twirl three notes and make a star—
My heart that walked with bitterness
Came back from very far.

Three shining notes were all he had,
And yet they made a starry call—
I caught life back against my breast
And kissed it, scars and all.

Sara Teasdale

WISDOM

It was a night of early spring,
The winter-sleep was scarcely broken;
Around us shadows and the wind
Listened for what was never spoken.

Though half a score of years are gone,
Spring comes as sharply now as then—
But if we had it all to do
It would be done the same again.

It was a spring that never came;
But we have lived enough to know
That what we never have, remains;
It is the things we have that go.

Sara Teasdale

THE BIRD AND THE TREE

Blackbird, blackbird in the cage,
There's something wrong tonight.
Far off the sheriff's footfall dies,
The minutes crawl like last year's flies
Between the bars, and like an age
The hours are long tonight.

The sky is like a heavy lid
Out here beyond the door tonight.
What's that? A mutter down the street.
What's that? The sound of yells and feet.
For what you didn't do or did
You'll pay the score tonight.

No use to reek with reddened sweat,
No use to whimper and to sweat.
They've got the rope; they've got the guns,
They've got the courage and the guns,
And that's the reason why tonight
No use to ask them any more.
They'll fire the answer through the door—
You're out to die tonight.

There where the lonely cross-road lies,
There is no place to make replies;
But silence, inch by inch, is there,
And the right limb for a lynch is there;
And a lean daw waits for both your eyes,
Blackbird.

Perhaps you'll meet again some place.
Look for the mask upon the face:
That's the way you'll know them there—
A white mask to hide the face.
And you can halt and show them there
The things that they are deaf to now,
And they can tell you what they meant—
To wash the blood with blood. But how
If you are innocent?

Blackbird singer, blackbird mute,
They choked the seed you might have found.
Out of a thorny field you go—
For you it may be better so—
And leave the sowers of the ground
To eat the harvest of the fruit,
Blackbird.

Ridgely Torrence

THE SON

(Southern Ohio Market Town)

I heard an old farm-wife,
Selling some barley,
Mingle her life
And the name "Charley."

Saying: "The crop's all in,
We're about through now;
Long nights will soon begin,
We're just us two now."

"Twelve bushel at sixty cents,
It's all I carried—
He sickened making fence;
He was to be married—"

"It feels like frost was near—
His hair was curly.
The spring was late that year,
But the harvest early."

Ridgely Torrence

CALIBAN IN THE COAL MINES

God, we don't like to complain,
We know that the mine is no lark—
But—there's the pools from the rain;
But—there's the cold and the dark.

God, you don't know what it is—
You, in Your well-lighted sky—
Watching the meteors whizz;
Warm, with the sun always by.

God, if You had but the moon
Stuck in Your cap for a lamp,
Even You'd tire of it soon,
Down in the dark and the damp.

Nothing but blackness above
And nothing that moves but the cars . . .
God, if You wish for our love,
Fling us a handful of stars!

Louis Untermeyer

IRONY

Why are the things that have no death
The ones with neither sight nor breath!
Eternity is thrust upon
A bit of earth, a senseless stone.
A grain of dust, a casual clod
Receives the greatest gift of God.
A pebble in the roadway lies—
It never dies.

The grass our fathers cut away
Is growing on their graves to-day;
The tiniest brooks that scarcely flow
Eternally will come and go.
There is no kind of death to kill
The sands that lie so meek and still . . .
But Man is great and strong and wise—
And so he dies.

Louis Untermeyer

BALLET

Are you not weary,
great gold cross
shining in the wind—
are you not weary
of seeing the stars
turning over you
and the sun
going to his rest
and you frozen with
a great lie
that leaves you
rigid as a knight
on a marble coffin?
—and you,
higher still,
 robin,
untwisting a song
from the bare
top-twigs,
are you not
weary of labor,
even the labor of
a song?

Come down—join me
for I am lonely.

First it will be
a quiet pace

to ease our stiffness
but as the west yellows
you will be ready!

Here in the middle
of the roadway
we will fling
ourselves round
with dust lilies
till we are bound in
their twining stems!
We will tear

Their flowers
with arms flashing!

And when
the astonished stars
push aside
their curtains
they will see us
fall exhausted where
wheels and
the pounding feet
of horses
will crush forth
our laughter.

William Carlos Williams

THE EAGLE AND THE MOLE

Avoid the reeking herd,
Shun the polluted flock,
Live like that stoic bird,
The eagle of the rock.

The huddled warmth of crowds
Begets and fosters hate;
He keeps, above the clouds,
His cliff inviolate.

When flocks are folded warm,
And herds to shelter run,
He sails above the storm,
He stares into the sun.

If in the eagle's track
Your sinews cannot leap,
Avoid the lathered pack,
Turn from the steaming sheep.

If you would keep your soul
From spotted sight and sound,
Live like the velvet mole;
Go burrow under ground.

And there hold intercourse
With roots of trees and stones,
With rivers at their source,
And disembodied bones.

Elinor Wylie

My acknowledgment and thanks are due to the following publishers for the use of the poems in this book. Boni & Liveright, Doubleday Page & Company, The Egoist Press, The Four Seas Company, Harcourt, Brace & Company, Heinemann & Company, Henry Holt & Company, Houghton Mifflin Company, Alfred A. Knopf, Little, Brown & Company, The Macmillan Company, Mitchell Kennerley, and to the "Dial" and "Bookman" Magazines.

Leonora Speyer

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